

From: ["Washburn, Ben" </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE:GROUP \(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT\)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=FDA03CBA30C542059E0AF4208DAD96DA-WASHBURN,BEN>](mailto:Washburn.Ben@EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE:GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=FDA03CBA30C542059E0AF4208DAD96DA-WASHBURN,BEN)
To:
CC:
Date: 7/3/2014 2:19:48 PM
Subject: OPA Daily Digest 7/3/14

OPA Daily Digest for 7/3/14

Congressional Inquiries:

Sen. Roy Blunt (Mo.) – Email/Letter – 6/20/14: Gentry County concerned with EPA fine for violation of the CWA. Due: 7/7/14. Contact: LaTonya Sanders, 7555 (open)

Rep. Sam Graves (Mo.); **Rep. Vicky Hartzler** (Mo.); **Rep. Jason Smith** (Mo.); **Rep Ann Wagner** (Mo.); **Rep. Billy Long** (Mo.); **Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer** (Mo.); **Rep. Kevin Yoder** (Kan.); **Rep. Lynn Jenkins** (Kan.); **Rep. Adrian Smith** (Neb.) – Letter – 6/17/14: Concerns regarding the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permitting of Water Treatment Plant lime residuals along the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. Due: 7/2/14. Contact: LaTonya Sanders, 7555 (open)

State Government Inquiries:

None

Press Inquiries:

Associated Press, Kansas City - Maria Fisher – 6/2/14: Follow-up questions regarding National Zinc site in Cherryvale, Kan. Contact: David Bryan, 7433 (open)

St. Louis Post Dispatch – Blythe Bernhard – 7/3/14: Questions about vandalism at the Spanish Village air monitoring station. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (closed)

St. Louis Business Journal – Rick Jackoway – 7/3/14: Questions about Carter Carburetor Site in St. Louis, Mo. Contact: Chris Whitley, 7394 (open)

KMOX Radio – Kevin Killeen – 7/3/14: Questions about vandalism at the Spanish Village air monitoring station. Contact: Ben Washburn, 7364 (closed)

Environmental Stories:

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Air monitors stolen from neighborhood near Bridgeton, West Lake landfills – 7/3/14 - Air monitors stationed in the Spanish Village neighborhood near the smoldering Bridgeton and radioactive West Lake landfills were stolen, a spokesman for the Environmental Protection Agency said today.

http://www.stltoday.com/lifestyles/health-med-fit/health/air-monitors-stolen-from-neighborhood-near-bridgeton-west-lake-landfills/article_d03598a0-ad3d-516d-8070-35d2e09c63d2.html

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - Smoldering Bridgeton Landfill at risk of surface fires, analyst says - 7/2/14 - An underground fire at the Bridgeton Landfill is spreading and moving closer to the surface, according to an engineer who analyzed temperature data from the site. http://www.stltoday.com/lifestyles/health-med-fit/health/smoldering-bridgeton-landfill-at-risk-of-surface-fires-analyst-says/article_651b6064-5d02-594c-bb1b-a33186e8afc2.html

KGAN Ch. 2 Waterloo, Iowa – Johnson County Issues Mandatory Evacuations - 7/2/14 - The Johnson County Board of Supervisors have issued a mandatory evacuation for the areas around Coralville reservoir and the Iowa River near Iowa City. <http://www.cbs2iowa.com/news/features/top-stories/stories/johnson-county-issues-mandatory-evacuations-28084.shtml>

Des Moines Register - Northey/Gipp: Iowa on the right path for improving water quality - 7/3/14 - We still have more to do, but we are on the right path. Iowa is leading the way in using voluntary, science-based practices for nonpoint sources and innovative proactive approaches from point sources to improve water quality. <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/columnists/iowa-view/2014/07/03/right-path/12121425/>
NOTE: Paywall issues may keep you from seeing this article. Full text is included at the end of this email.

Marshalltown Times-Republican (Iowa) - Flood waters soak Marshall County - 7/2/14 - Several Marshalltown streets continue to close as the Iowa River spills out of its banks and onto area roadways. The Iowa River crested at 21.03 feet Tuesday afternoon and will continue to crest to 22.2 feet. <http://www.timesrepublican.com/page/content.detail/id/573274/Flood-waters-soak-Marshall-County.html>

The Missourian (Columbia) - PSC Approves Ameren's Request to Expand Energy Center for Landfill - 7/2/14 - The Missouri Public Service Commission has approved Ameren's request to expand the boundaries of its Labadie Energy Center for a proposed coal ash landfill. http://www.emissourian.com/local_news/business/article_6e3a83c0-0230-11e4-935c-0019bb2963f4.html

St. Louis Public Radio - Missouri Public Service Commission Gives The Go-Ahead To Ameren's Coal Ash Landfill Plans - 7/2/14 - The Missouri Public Service Commission has signed off on Ameren Missouri's plan to build a coal ash landfill at its power plant in Franklin County. <http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/missouri-public-service-commission-gives-go-ahead-amerens-coal-ash-landfill-plans>

KTVI Ch. 2 St. Louis - PSC approves coal ash landfill in Franklin County - 7/3/14 - Plans to build a coal ash landfill in Franklin County are one step closer to reality. Our partners at the Post Dispatch are reporting the Missouri Public Service Commission unanimously approved Ameren's plans for the development in Labadie. <http://fox2now.com/2014/07/03/psc-approves-coal-ash-landfill-in-franklin-county/>

St. Louis Post-Dispatch - PSC approves Franklin County coal ash dump - 7/3/14 - The Missouri Public Service Commission unanimously approved Ameren Missouri's plan to build a coal ash landfill for its Labadie power plant, leaving final approval of the project in the hands of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/psc-approves-franklin-county-coal-ash-dump/article_73995f5e-b7bc-5f63-973b-6cd91d71b903.html

KMUW Wichita Public Radio (Kan.) - Second Source Found In West Wichita Chemical Contamination - 7/2/14 - The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has identified an additional source for chemical contamination in West Wichita. According to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, a second dry cleaner has been found to be a contributor to the chemical plume. <http://kmuw.org/post/second-source-found-west-wichita-chemical-contamination>

Warren County Journal-Banner (Mo.) - West Fork Mine Presents Underground Challenge - 7/2/14 - A situation that began with the discovery of a couple of small sinkholes on the West Fork Mine property on April 4 continues to challenge engineers and concern local citizens. Four days later, a third sinkhole was discovered. http://www.waynecojournalbanner.com/news/article_67e28f84-0219-11e4-ad3e-001a4bcf6878.html

Fulton Sun (Mo.) - Hog confinement battle continues with agreement revival, petition - 7/3/14 - Shirley Kidwell signed a document in 1999 with nine other Callaway County residents and Gary Horstmeier, owner and operator of Horstmeier Farms in Kingdom City, which she said prevents a potential hog confinement site coming to Callaway County. She signed another document Wednesday — fifteen years later — which she hopes will have the same, continuing effect. <http://www.fultonsun.com/news/2014/jul/03/hog-confinement-battle-continues-agreement-revival/>

Nebraska Radio Network - Ag coalition forms to fight back against proposed EPA rule - 7/2/14 - The “Common Sense Nebraska” coalition claims the Environmental Protection Agency wants to extend its reach onto family farms. Nebraska Farm Bureau President Steve Nelson claims the EPA is seeking to expand the Clean Water Act to regulate farm ponds, creeks, and ditches. <http://nebraskaradionetwork.com/2014/07/02/ag-coalition-forms-to-fight-back-against-proposed-epa-rule/>

Kansas City Business Journal - KCP&L signs deal to buy energy from Kansas wind farm - 7/2/14 - Kansas City Power & Light's parent company will buy power from a Central Kansas wind farm, the company announced Wednesday. <http://www.bizjournals.com/kansascity/news/2014/07/02/kcpl-signs-deal-to-buy-energy-from-kansas-wind.html>

Environmental Leader - Carbon Dioxide-Reducing Cement Advances - 7/2/14 - Startup company Solidia Technologies and the US Department of Energy's National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) have partnered to accelerate the development of cement that can reduce the carbon footprint of concrete by up to 70 percent. <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2014/07/03/carbon-dioxide-reducing-cement-advances/>

Brownfield Ag News - EPA to tour farms and discuss water rule - 7/2/14 - EPA officials will be meeting with farmers and other ag folks this summer about their proposal on “Waters of the U.S.”

The EPA says its Administrator Gina McCarthy will try to “clear up misunderstandings” about the rule and urge the ag industry to submit formal comments on it. The EPA extended the public comment period to October. <http://brownfieldagnews.com/2014/07/02/epa-tour-farms-discuss-water-rule/>

Wall Street Journal - Utilities Report Cyber Incidents to Energy Department - 7/3/14 - Utilities have reported cyber incidents to the Energy Department involving one of the largest power plants in the U.S. and high-voltage transmission systems in Michigan and Iowa. <http://online.wsj.com/articles/utilities-report-cyber-incidents-to-energy-department-1404343159>

NOTE: Paywall issues may keep you from seeing this article. Full text is included at the end of this email.

Reuters - U.S. EPA approves new fuels for federal biofuel mandate - 7/2/14 - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday expanded the types of fuel that can be used to satisfy the federal biofuel mandate, a move that could play a role in the agency's delayed targets for 2014 renewable fuel use. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/02/usa-epa-biofuels-idUSL2N0PD1XB20140702>

Huffington Post (blog) - Waiting For Environmental Justice to Come - 7/2/14 - Environmental toxins and pollutants know no class or race, and yet government policies and corporate activities place an undue burden on the health of the poor and communities of color. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-a-love/waiting-for-environmental_b_5549181.html

Bloomberg - EPA Adds Natural Gas From Landfills to Renewable Fuels Program - 7/2/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency said natural gas from landfills that is compressed or liquefied can be classified as a cellulosic biofuel under the Renewable Fuel Standard, a decision that could boost the use of natural gas in vehicles. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-07-02/epa-adds-natural-gas-from-landfills-to-renewable-fuels-program.html>

Water Industry Outlook Reveals Major Challenges - 7/3/14 - Aging infrastructure and capital needs are the most significant challenges facing the water industry, according to WeiserMazars' 2014 US Water Industry Outlook. <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2014/07/03/water-industry-outlook-reveals-major-challenges/>

Domestic Fuel - Ethanol Report on Energy Independence - 7/3/14 - As we prepare to celebrate our nation's Independence Day, many of us will be out on the roads driving to see family, friends and fireworks. But, thanks to upheaval in a little country halfway across the world, gas prices are up again so we are going to be paying more at the pump, a stark reminder that we are not so independent when it comes to our energy sources. <http://domesticfuel.com/2014/07/03/ethanol-report-on-energy-independence/>

Domestic Fuel - Corn Fiber Approved as Cellulosic Feedstock - 7/2/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency issued final rules Wednesday to qualify additional fuel pathways for the production of cellulosic biofuel, including crop residue such as corn fiber. <http://domesticfuel.com/2014/07/02/corn-fiber-approved-as-cellulosic-feedstock/>

E&E News - Obama admin offers \$4B in loan guarantees for renewables, efficiency - 7/3/14 - The Obama administration offered as much as \$4 billion in loan guarantees today for clean and efficient energy and fuel projects, rejuvenating a program that not long ago was a political punching bag. <http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060002358/>

Quad City Times - Corps closing lock and dam amid flooding - 7/3/14 - A Mississippi River lock and dam north of St. Louis is facing shutdown as flooding worsens, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said Thursday. http://qctimes.com/news/state-and-regional/iowa/corps-closing-lock-and-dam-amid-flooding/article_b43e8ec4-50a7-5538-98b3-f211f8cb49d6.html

BNA - Current Ozone Standard Insufficient to Protect Public Health, Science Advisers Say - 7/2/14 - The current national ambient air quality standard for ozone of 75 parts per billion isn't protective of human health, according to the Environmental Protection Agency's science advisers. http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=49002097&vname=denotallissues&jd=a0f2k7a2h8&split=0

BNA - Natural Gas, Electricity From Landfill Biogas Approved as Renewable Fuel Pathways - 7/2/14 - Compressed and liquefied natural gas produced at landfills and municipal wastewater treatment sites have been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency as additional methods, or pathways, that qualify as cellulosic biofuels, whose production thus far has failed to materialize in significant volumes, the EPA said in a final rule announced July 2. http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=49002107&vname=denotallissues&jd=a0f2m1f5w3&split=0

BNA - API Document on Pipeline Safety Practices - 7/2/14 - An American Petroleum Institute recommended practice document on pipeline safety management systems is likely to be completed by Dec. 1, the chairman of the group drafting the document said July 2. http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=49002093&vname=denotallissues&jd=a0f2k6y2q2&split=0

BNA - EPA Moves to Help Degreasing Shops, Manufacturers Find Alternatives for Solvent - 7/2/14 - The Environmental Protection Agency is working with commercial degreasing operations, the manufacturers that contract with them and other interested parties to identify substitutes for trichloroethylene's use to remove oils, lubricants and similar substances from equipment. http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=49002094&vname=denotallissues&jd=a0f2k6y5j7&split=0

Inside EPA - EPA Suggests Climate As FY16 Budget Priority, Prompting States' Caution - 7/2/14 - EPA in a memo to top agency officials is suggesting that climate change policies such as its proposed greenhouse gas (GHG) rule for existing utilities will be a fiscal year 2016 budget priority. <http://cleanenergyreport.com/201407022475993/Clean-Energy-Report-Daily-News/News/epa-suggests-climate-as-fy16-budget-priority-prompting-states-caution/menu-id-202.html>

Inside EPA - EPA Suggests Climate As FY16 Budget Priority, Prompting States' Caution - 7/2/14 - EPA in a memo to top agency officials is suggesting that climate change policies such as its proposed greenhouse gas (GHG) rule for existing utilities will be a fiscal year 2016 budget priority. <http://cleanenergyreport.com/201407022475993/Clean-Energy-Report-Daily-News/News/epa-suggests-climate-as-fy16-budget-priority-prompting-states-caution/menu-id-202.html>

Inside EPA - High Court's Denial Of Labor Case Leaves Path Open For Stormwater Suits - 7/2/14 - Industry is still seeking a lawsuit that could act as a vehicle to test arguments in favor of overturning the wide deference courts grant EPA and other agencies to interpret their rules, after the Supreme Court let stand a closely watched labor ruling that raised the deference question -- potentially clearing a path for two pending Clean Water Act (CWA) suits that have been seen as likely test cases. <http://insideepa.com/201407022475880/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/high-courts-denial-of-labor-case-leaves-path-open-for-stormwater-suits/menu-id-95.html>

Inside EPA - To Protect EPA Rules, Waxman Seeks Energy Panel Review Of Science Bill - 7/2/14 - House Energy & Commerce Committee ranking member Henry Waxman (D-CA) is urging the panel to assert its jurisdiction over pending legislation that would bar EPA from using "secret" science in rules, warning the bill could stymie implementation of key environmental laws and invalidate data underpinning existing EPA policies. <http://insideepa.com/201407022475930/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/to-protect-epa-rules-waxman-seeks-energy-panel-review-of-science-bill/menu-id-95.html>

Inside EPA - Utility Regulators In Key States Optimistic On Compliance With GHG ESPS - 7/2/14 - Utility regulators in a handful of key coal power states are optimistic that they will be able to comply with EPA's landmark proposed existing source performance standards (ESPS) to cut greenhouse gases (GHGs) from existing power plants. <http://insideepa.com/201407032475996/EPA-Daily-News/Daily-News/utility-regulators-in-key-states-optimistic-on-compliance-with-ghg-esps/menu-id-95.html>

Press Releases:

Link to all R7 press releases: <http://go.usa.gov/Qx5>

None

Fact Sheets:

Link to all R7 fact sheets: <http://www.epa.gov/region7/factsheets>

None

Upcoming Administrator/RA Events:

* New additions noted with an asterisk

7/9/14 – Waters of the U.S. events with Nancy Stoner, Columbia, Mo. Contact: Karen Flournoy, 7782

7/9/14 – Hinkson Creek meeting, Columbia, Mo. Contact: Shawn Grindstaff, 7274

7/10/14 – Meeting with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Office. Contact: Cecilia Tapia, 7733

7/11/14 – Joint R6/R7 COOP Meeting, Dallas, Texas. Contact: Chris Taylor, 7736

7/14/14 – Utilities State Government Organizational Annual Meeting. Contact: Becky Weber, 7487

7/15/14 - Small Business Majority Roundtable, Waterloo, Iowa. Contact: Sarah Hatch, 7199

7/21/14 – Civil Rights Event, Washington, D.C. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

7/22/14 – Budget Forum, Washington, D.C. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

7/23/14 – Senior Leadership Retreat for Regional Administrators, Washington, D.C. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

7/24/14 – National Tribal Operations Committee Meeting, Washington DC. Contact: Lynn Slugantz, 7883

7/28-30/14 – Regional Tribal Operations Committee Meeting, Niobrara, Neb. Contact: Lynn Slugantz, 7883

7/31/14 – Missouri Environmental & Energy Conference at the Lake, Osage Beach, Mo. Contact: David Cozad, 7587

8/6/14 - St. Louis Regional Chamber of Commerce Meeting, St. Louis, Mo. Contact: David Bryan, 7433

8/20/14 – Tribal Consultation Training, Regional Office. Contact: Heather Hamilton, 7039

DRA:

7/10/14 – Meeting with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Office. Contact: Cecilia Tapia, 7733

7/11/14 – Joint R6/R7 COOP Meeting, Dallas, Texas. Contact: Chris Taylor, 7736

7/21/14 – Civil Rights Event, Washington, DC. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

7/21-22/14 – Budget Forum, Washington, D.C. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

7/21/14 – Civil Rights Event, Washington, D.C. Contact: Julia Cacho, 7071

7/23-7/24/14 Executive Management Council Meeting, Washington, DC Contact: Dana Peters, 7444

8/20/14 – Tribal Consultation Training, Regional Office. Contact: Heather Hamilton, 7039

RA/Immediate Office

None

Other Events

AWMD

None

CNSL

None

ECO/EJ

None

ENSV

None

PLMG

None

RA/OPA

9/29-30/14 - Healthy Schools Outreach, Missouri School Plant Managers' Association Conference, Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks, Mo. Contact: Kathleen Fenton, 7874 and Harry Diesel, 7382

SUPR

None

WWPD

7/9/14 – Waters of the U.S. events with Nancy Stoner, Columbia, Mo. Contact: Karen Flourney, 7782

8/18-21/14 – Purdue Pesticide Program Certification and Training Workshop, Indianapolis, Ind. Contact: Douglas Jones, 7592

Des Moines Register

Iowa on the right path for improving water quality

By Bill Northey and Chuck Gipp

11:19 p.m. CDT July 2, 2014

We appreciate The Des Moines Register's recent coverage examining nutrient loading in our state's waterways. The articles and editorial did a good job examining the challenges faced by cities and industries that discharge directly into a waterway as well as understanding the need to also address runoff from farm fields and urban areas.

Iowa is fortunate to have strong leadership from both the point source community, such as municipal wastewater treatment plants and industrial facilities, and nonpoint sources, including farmers and landowners, committed to address these issues.

The Iowa nutrient reduction strategy brought together stakeholders from both the point and nonpoint source communities to develop a comprehensive plan focused on using a science- and technology-based approach to assess and reduce nutrients delivered to Iowa waterways and, eventually, into the Gulf of Mexico.

In the past, there had been a tendency on both sides to point fingers and place blame, and the result was inaction. However, since the strategy was completed last year we have seen positive responses from both the point source and nonpoint source communities working to do an even better job reducing nutrient loading.

After just one year, 21 wastewater facilities with major permits for discharging are already engaged in feasibility studies to determine how much nitrogen and phosphorus are entering their plants prior to treatment and how much is being discharged after treatment.

This work will help those facilities treating wastewater determine the best steps to reduce nutrients being discharged at the end of the process. We have already seen major improvements in the city of Clinton, where 75 percent of both nitrogen and phosphorus are being removed, and Iowa City, where 72 percent of the nitrogen is being removed. Iowa City is also currently studying ways of reducing phosphorus.

But perhaps the biggest change we have seen has been in the positive attitude and willingness to look at solutions by wastewater permit holders. We have seen many of these facilities go from "what do we have to do" to "what can we do" to reduce nutrients. Many facilities are taking creative, proactive approaches to how nutrients can be reduced, including looking at how nutrient loads might be reduced before even reaching the plant.

Iowa's agriculture community is also stepping up. Many farmers are trying new practices on their farms to help them better manage their nutrients. For example, in just two weeks last fall, over 1,000 farmers signed up for cost-share funding to help implement new nutrient reduction practices on their farms. A total of \$2.8 million was available to help farmers try a water quality practice for the first time, with Iowa farmers providing at least another \$2.8 million.

Also, 13 watershed demonstration projects have been selected and are working within the large priority watersheds identified by the Iowa Water Resources Coordinating Council. These projects will receive \$5.8 million in funding through the Iowa water quality initiative over the next three years. In addition to the state funds, the 13 projects will provide over \$10 million in matching funds to support water quality improvement efforts.

All of this important work is making a difference. Recent reports have shown nitrates declining in the Raccoon and Iowa rivers. In fact, an analysis of the records on the Des Moines Water Works website shows a downward trend of 0.28 milligrams per year since 1999.

We recognize that we still have a lot of work to do, and all Iowans are encouraged to learn more and consider ways they can be involved. Wherever you live, the rain that falls on your property eventually makes its way to a river, lake or stream and can have an impact on water quality.

Our departments worked together, along with Iowa State University, to create www.CleanWaterIowa.org to provide information to all Iowans about what they can do to help protect water quality.

We still have more to do, but we are on the right path. Iowa is leading the way in using voluntary, science-based practices for nonpoint sources and innovative proactive approaches from point sources to improve water quality.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bill Northey, is Iowa's secretary of agriculture. Contact: agri@iowaagriculture.gov.

Chuck Gipp is director of Iowa's Department of Natural Resources.

Wall Street Journal

Utilities Report Cyber Incidents to Energy Department

Subsidiaries of ITC Holdings, Duke Energy and NRG Energy Tell DOE of Suspected Cyberattacks

By RACHAEL KING

July 2, 2014 7:19 p.m. ET

Utilities have reported cyber incidents to the Energy Department involving one of the largest power plants in the U.S. and high-voltage transmission systems in Michigan and Iowa.

The utilities, subsidiaries of ITC Holdings Corp. ITC -0.94% , Duke Energy Corp. DUK -1.22% and NRG Energy Inc., NRG -0.73% each filed a report to the Energy Department in the past year detailing suspected cyberattacks. The reports highlight the interest by hackers in targeting energy firms, and the vulnerabilities of IT systems used to run power generation and distribution equipment.

Duke Energy, which reported an incident at its Roxboro, N.C., plant in October 2013, said its notification to the DOE was a false alarm and that no attack took place. But the company said in a statement that it discovered "inactive remnants of a virus that had been previously isolated and removed from several computers." The company didn't say how the virus was introduced into its system at one of the country's largest power plants, or what its purpose was.

Duke said the infected computers were immediately isolated from the rest of the company's computer systems until further testing could be performed and remnants of the virus removed. All software was stripped off and reinstalled and the computers were tested again to ensure that no viruses remained on the computers, according to the statement.

ITC Holdings subsidiary ITC Transmission, which reported an incident in June 2013 in Michigan and Iowa, also said the report was a false alarm. "We have a sophisticated system to protect against cyber attacks, and a rigorous protocol for evaluating and responding to potential threats if they arise," the company said in a statement.

NRG Power Marketing, a subsidiary of NRG Energy, reported an incident in New York on April 24. The company declined to comment.

Symantec Corp. SYMC +0.74% , which sells cybersecurity software, Tuesday said one hacking group has been specifically targeting firms that generate and transmit electricity and petroleum pipeline operators by hacking into computer networks known as industrial control systems that are used to operate equipment such as turbines, valves and boilers.

Because electric power is the hub around which all other critical infrastructure revolves, it is an attractive target for cyberattacks, said Patrick C. Miller, founder of the nonprofit Energy Sector Security Consortium and a managing partner at the Anfield Group, a security consulting firm. "The means are available to virtually anyone with enough time," he said. The opportunity is high because of the open nature of the targets, which were designed to be continually up and running. Utilities focused on making the systems easy to manage using remote electronic communications, rather than on cybersecurity, according to Mr. Miller.

In general, malicious software can make its way into utility networks in a few different ways. The Department of Homeland Security, in a report released in May, warned about the risk of those industrial control systems that are accessed over the Internet.

An unnamed public utility was recently compromised when a sophisticated hacking organization gained unauthorized access to its control system network, according to the report.

Another issue is that the same control centers that govern industrial systems also connect to the corporate business networks run by the utilities, said Carl Wright, former chief information security officer of the U.S. Marine Corps who now works for a cybersecurity startup.

Sometimes utilities feed real-time data from their industrial control networks to their business networks in order to facilitate billing or status updates even though those networks are supposed to be kept separate, he said. This connection could allow viruses to move from business networks to the networks that control industrial systems, he said.

"This is the most dangerous time we've had as a country, specific to cyber," said Mr. Wright. "The reason is that we have senior leadership in corporations and government that are barely IT-literate," he said. "The people who are making policies and decisions truly don't understand it."